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Salvias GALORE

While these salvia varieties may differ in texture, size and color, they all share attributes in tremendous performance and beauty.



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We have seen a plethora of new annual and tender perennial salvia introductions over the past few years. This genus in the mint family is comprised of more than 1,000 species of herbs, perennials, annuals and shrubs. The ornamental annual focus has been on the multiple species within splendens, farinacea, coccinea, nemorosa, guaranitica and assorted interspecifics.

I believe it is important to describe the features and benefits of some significant current varieties in the market and new introductions for 2020. The photos were taken during my visits to Costa Farms, Young's Plant Farm, University of Georgia, Metrolina Greenhouses, Colorado State University, Penn State University and Raker-Roberta's this summer.

The salvia varieties all share some common attributes including heat tolerance, drought tolerance and prolific flower count, as well as attractiveness to hummingbirds, bees and butterflies. They differ primarily in the length, structure, color of the inflorescence, plant size, leaf shape, texture and shades of green foliage.

My focus is on characteristics that distinguish each introduction and to provide insight into the selection process for spring and summer production programs.

1. 'CATHEDRAL BLUE BICOLOR'

Green Fuse Botanicals

This vegetative series introduced more than 10 years ago continues to be an integral part of many spring salvia programs. The reasons are many, including uniformity, compactness, floriferousness, flower size, stem length, durability and multiple applications in spring and summer production programs. It is comprised of seven colors including Blue Bicolor, the latest introduction. This variety was entered in all of the trials and was eye-catching with an intense bicolor inflorescence. It is multi-branched with a deep blue corolla and bright gray calyx that was distinctive and prolific. Consistently a top performer in every trial site, it was a Top 10 performer in the Metrolina late summer evaluation and was the highest rated salvia in the Young's trial in Alabama. The series matures at 12 to 18 inches. It is utilized in mixed containers and landscape beds.



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2. FASHION SERIES

Green Fuse Botanicals

This variety is commonly called Fuchsia Sage due to the long, bright and pendulous fuchsia-shaped flowers. This new series comprised of five unique colors was introduced last year and was an impressive standout in multiple trials from south to north in 2018 and 2019. This is a 'Wendy's Wish' type but with a more compact form. The long inflorescence develops well above the foliage with a striking calyx and corolla contrast creating an eye catching canopy. The series is day length neutral, matures at 24 to 30 inches, and its production application will include quarts, gallons, landscape beds and as a thriller in large containers. The series is adaptable in full sun and even partial shade. It is also a wonderful pollinator with a hummingbird and butterfly presence throughout the summer, and the entire series continued to flower through early fall. I have seen all the colors in performance trials, and Cherry and Burgundy were especially eye-popping with the contrasting calyx and corolla. Cherry was the highest rated interspecific salvia in the Young's trial.

3. SKYSCRAPER SERIES

Selecta One

This interspecific series debuted in 2018, was trialed in many regional trials, and was in many spring programs, landscape sites and public gardens this year. The Pink, Orange and Dark Purple varieties have a prodigious flower count, large tubular corollas, and durable branching with a persistent spire-like inflorescence with differing calyx and corolla colors. They will go the distance and provide season long interest and color in landscape sites and large containers, and are a wonderful pollinator series. The plants will mature at 18 to 36 inches with outstanding uniformity. Consumer applications include landscape beds and in large containers as a thriller.

4. 'ROMAN RED'

Ball FloraPlant

This new annual variety is described by the breeder as the the most vibrant red interspecific on the market

and, based on its performance in multiple regional trials in the ground and in containers, I would have to concur. It has superior vigor, excellent semi-mounding habit, a striking red corolla with a deeper tone of calyx, and the inflorescence towers over the

foliage creating an extremely colorful canopy. This variety will have exceptional application in large containers and specifically in landscape sites as a background planting. The mature size ranges from 24 to 40 inches predicated on the planting location.

5. 'UNPLUGGED SO BLUE'

Proven Winners

'Unplugged So Blue', a farinacea species, is a 2020 introduction and complements the farinacea varieties 'Evolution' and 'Blue Frost' currently in the Proven Winners program. It was in multiple trials this summer,



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VAUGHN'S VIEW

and the attributes that impressed me were the durability, upright architecture and lustrous foliage. The true blue multiple flower spikes were plentiful and reflected an intense, eye-catching brightness. This variety matures at 18 to 24 inches and will have multiple applications as a compact thriller in combination containers and landscape areas.

6. 'PURPLE AND BLOOM'

Ball FloraPlant

This new introduction for 2020 is dramatic and bold! It is a robust, well-branched, heat-tolerant variety with a contrasting non-fading inflorescence of black calyces and violet-purple corollas. The leaves are elongated and heart shaped with a deep green color. This variety was in multiple trials in beds and large containers, and the flower canopy was clearly visible and colorful, which can be problematic for many salvia varieties late in the season. This variety is slightly more compact than 'Black and Bloom' and blooms earlier. It will mature at 40 to 48 inches in the ground and slightly less in large containers. This is a wonderful pollinator, with excellent application as a background element in landscapes.

7. 'BIG BLUE'

PanAmerican Seed

This longispicata x farinacea seed variety was introduced last year and was an outstanding summer performer from Florida to Michigan. In summer trials this year, it continued to manifest many attributes including vigor, continuous flowering, dense growth habit and prominent, long, striking clear blue flower spikes. This will be a late spring, early



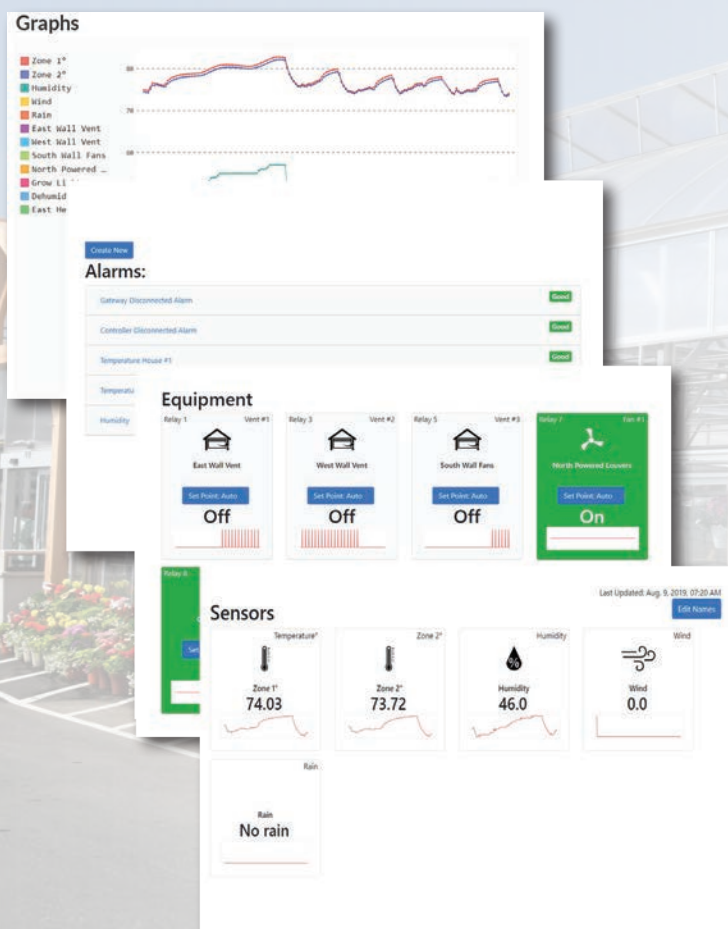
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summer annual in the northern regions and will continue to flower until frost. It is a magnet for hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies, as demonstrated in trials the past two summer seasons. This is the first of its kind from seed and is one of the most impressive and prolific salvias I have evaluated the past two trial seasons.

8. 'ROCKIN' BLUE SUEDE SHOES'

Proven Winners

The Rockin' series is a collection of salvias comprised of Deep Purple, Fuchsia, Playin' the Blues and Golden Delicious. They differ in flower color, plant size, leaf texture and foliage color. Blue Suede Shoes was entered in southern and northern trials this summer in containers and ground beds. The rugose dark leaf foliage, light blue corolla and charcoal calyx differentiated this variety from other interspecific salvias in the trial. The flower color was lighter in the south late in August but a darker blue in the Northern trials. It is an excellent rebloomer and is a sterile variety with no seed set. It was trialed in full sun but tolerates partial shade and matures at 30 to 36 inches. It will have excellent application in large containers and in the background of landscape beds.

9. VIBE IGNITION SERIES

Plant Haven

This interspecific series comprised of Fuchsia, Purple and White was introduced in 2017 and has become part of many spring programs throughout the country. The varieties are well branched with glossy mid-green foliage, compact with a medium-sized flower. This petite salvia is extremely heat and drought tolerant and thrives in a dry environment, but it is adaptable in high humidity locations as demonstrated in trials and production programs in the South. The series was flowering prolifically in North Carolina, Dallas Arboretum and Penn State in late August. The vibrant and bright racemes are positioned well above the foliage to create a colorful impact. The series matures at 24 inches, is hardy in Zone 7, and is listed as a tender perennial. Application includes containers, cuttings and xeriscape gardens.

10. SUMMER JEWEL SERIES

American Takii

This was a strategic year to reintroduce the dwarf annual Summer Jewel series to the summer trials program in light of the introduction of many unique varieties from multiple

breeders. Red was introduced in 2011 followed by Pink, White and Lavender in subsequent years. Every variety is an All-America Selections winner, and Red is also a Fleuroselect Gold Medal winner. This seed series is a breakthrough in genetic breeding and continues

to match interspecific varieties in flowering with multiple flowers stacked on the stem and a compact, upright habit. The series flowers prolifically under extreme heat and drought conditions and offers additional attributes including flower stability, uniformity and



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earliness. Its uniformity and floriferousness were manifested in the North Carolina and Dallas Arboretum trials in late summer. Production application includes quarts and mixed containers.

11. ICON SERIES

Dümmen Orange

This farinacea series introduced in 2018 was in production and retail programs this spring. It is comprised of three colors: Light Blue, Violet and Dark Blue. The series was in multiple trial sites during 2018 and 2019. This is a uniform, compact and floriferous series with vibrant and prolific flowers and lustrous green foliage. It matures at 12 to 16 inches and has multiple applications for the consumer in borders and mixed containers.



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12. SALGOON SERIES

HilverdaFlorist

The interspecific entries in the summer trials this year also included HilverdaFlorist (formerly HilverdaKooij). Their breeding focus has historically included dianthus, echinacea, scabiosa and helleborus, and they have just recently introduced three new colors of interspecific salvia for 2019: Violet, Purple and Pink, as well as



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two pre-commercial introductions for 2020: Red and Light Lavender. They were in multiple trials including Metrolina, Colorado State University and Penn State. The most striking characteristics of the collection were the uniformity, branching and contrasting colors of the stems, corolla and calyx. The grower has many choices today in interspecific salvia, and the Salgoon collection augments the selection process.

13. FARINA SERIES

Benary+

We have many competing farinacea series and standalone seed and vegetative varieties in the market, and they share many attributes including heat tolerance, season-long flowering and floriferousness. This vegetative Farina series was bred by Volmary, is represented in the American market by Benary+ as well as Vivero, and is renamed and marketed as Majesty. This is a complete series of six colors including Arctic Blue, Bicolor Blue, Blue, Silver Blue, Violet and White. It has been in the summer trials for three years and has demonstrated outstanding uniformity, sturdiness, minimal flower cycling and multiple flower spikes. The series matures at 12 to 16 inches. [gpn](#)

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CLARIFICATION!

In last month's Vaughn's View, the variety impatiens 'SunPatiens Compact Orchid Blush' was referenced with the incorrect image. The correct image is shown below.

